

Committee: JCC

Issue: Rwanda-backed Military Group in Goma

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INTRODUCTION

M23, also known as the March 23 Movement, is a Rwanda-backed armed group that is actively fighting against Congolese forces that reside in eastern DRC. The group is named after a 2009 resolution that sought to end the revolt between the Tutsi-led rebel group and the Congolese government. Created in 2012, the group started after a rebellion against the Congolese government for accusations of failing to implement a 2009 agreement between the two groups. They started to make territorial gains in Congo, even going as far as seizing Goma for 10 days before withdrawal, but in January 2025, the group made more aggressive capturings of towns and DRC's capital, Goma.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- **Rwandan Genocide:** The Rwandan Genocide (April 7, 1994 – July 19, 1994) is the genocide against the Tutsi people of Rwanda that occurred for 100 days.
- **March 23 Movement:** The March 23 Movement (M23) is the rebel group that emerged because of DRC's failure to implement the agreement made by CNDP. They have control over Goma as of February 2025.

- **The First Congo War:** The First Congo War (October 24, 1996 – May 16, 1997) is the first war between DRC and Rwanda, after Rwandan forces enter DRC. It ended in the overthrow of Mobutu Sese Seko.
- **The Second Congo War:** The Second Congo War (August 2, 1998 – July 18, 2003) is the second war between DRC and Rwanda, after groups were fighting for the overthrow of Kabila.

BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUE

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has faced many conflicts since 1991, where it is estimated that a total number of 6 million people have died since then. The first issue was The Rwandan Genocide. After the DRC had become independent and the assassination of leader Patrice Lumumba that led to the DRC falling under the hands of dictator Mobutu Sese Seko for three decades, ethnic tensions had started to rise in Rwanda. More than 300,000 Tutsis, an ethnic African group, fled from Rwanda to other countries, but a majority fled to the DRC. In April 1994, after the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) took over Rwanda's Ugandan base, Hutu extremist militias attacked and killed 800,000-1,000,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus over a span of 100 days. This period is known as the Rwandan Genocide. The RPF took control of Kigali and many Hutu genocidaires fled to DRC, along with 2 million Hutu civilians who feared revenge.

The influx of Rwandan refugees started to cause tension in DRC between them, the local Congolese tribes, and Rwandan immigrants who arrived before 1960. Locals, who have

historically fought Tutsis and Hutus, had started to fear that they would be outnumbered. The Hutu militias that fled were now looking at taking control from Kigeme in Kigali and started to attack Rwanda and kill Tutsis in DRC, leading to Rwanda arming the Tutsi militias in DRC. Around this time, anti-Mobutu groups, tired of his corrupt rule were starting to rise, with the most notable one being the Tutsi-dominated Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) which was led by Laurent-Desire Kabila. Rwanda, who was upset at DRC and accused it of harbouring Hutu genocidaries, started to arm the rebels in DRC and send in troops to DRC in 1996. The First Congo War started on October 24th 1996, as the AFDL and Rwandan troops in Kivu launched attacks in eastern DRC. Rwandan allies started to join the fight. During this time, Rwandan troops killed Hutu populations, forced Tutsis back to Rwanda, and seized power on the mines bordering Rwanda in DRC. On May 17th 1997, the war ended as AFDL took control and Kabila declared himself as the leader of the DRC.

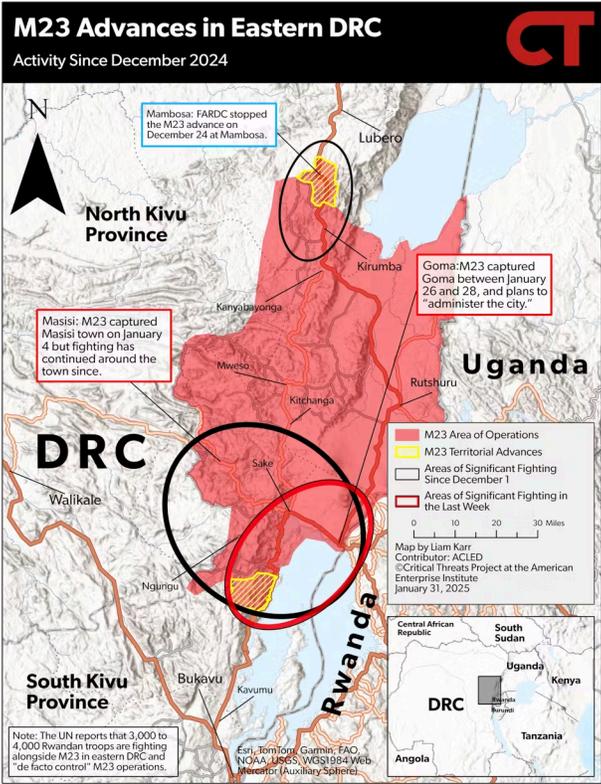
The Second Congo War takes place on August 1998 after Rwandan troops were forced out of DRC after Kigeme and Kabila had a falling out, which erupted fear into the Tutsis living in DRC. A group called Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) was formed and backed by Rwanda. The Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC), which was backed by Uganda, fought alongside RCD and wanted to overthrow Kabila. Kabila's government fought back and incited the Congolese people to attack the Tutsis. In 1991, a set of agreements between DRC, Uganda, and Rwanda was signed, with the Luanda Agreement (2002) and Lusaka Ceasfire Agreement (1999). Because of these agreements, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) were deployed to monitor the peace process, yet fighting continued to persist in some regions. Once the Second War ended, Rwandan milita groups were split between those who wanted to leave to Rwanda or remain in

DRC. Those who remained formed the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP). This group vowed to protect Congolese Tutsis, which garnered favour from the Rwandan government. On March 23 2009, an agreement was signed between the CNDP that was meant to make the CNDP a political group and integrate CNDP fighters to Congolese forces. However, in 2012, the process of completing this agreement’s demands fell through, leading to the creation of the March 23 Movement (M23), which was formed from the CNDP.

CURRENT CONTEXT

M23 has caused issues in DRC since then, but recent years have seen it escalate to another level. After 5 years of inactivity, M23 rebels took control of parts of North Kivu in July 2023. This caused a global outrage as accusations toward Kinshasa started to pile. At the beginning of 2025, M23 took the world by storm when they successfully seized Goma, the capital city of North

Kivu, along with other small towns on January 27, 2025. More than 7,000 people have been killed due to their control of Goma. (Al Jazeera) They have captured Rubaya, a crucial mining town to DRC’s exports (covers 15% of the world’s coltan). With Rubaya seized, the group has made income and has now been labeled as “profit-driven”.



(Left: Image from The Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute.)

The conflict has started to raise tensions between Rwanda and DRC to the point where another inter-state war seems to be becoming more likely as time goes by. Throughout this time, the DRC and many other governments have accused Rwanda of supporting and arming the M23 rebels. In response, Rwanda has denied these claims and accuses DRC of supporting extremist Hutu-backed militias. However, a UN report has proved that Rwanda and Uganda have been supporting the M23 movement as 3,000-4,000 Rwandan Defence Forces (RDF) have been found fighting alongside M23. (Cornelia Isabelle Toelgyes)

The citizens living in DRC, specifically Goma, are the ones who have been greatly impacted by this issue. The UNHCR has reported that 400,000 people have been displaced due to M23 rebels forcing people out of their homes. (Saltmarsh) According to a report on the Human Rights Watch, Displacement sites in Goma and South Kivu have been bombed, resulting in a few civilian deaths and the destruction of shelters. These camps have been bombed and the residents have been raped and killed by the rebels. To create even more damage, the group seizes mines so that they can create profit of the minerals for their group.

The conflicts between DRC and Rwanda have always attracted attention from the international community due to the reasoning behind these conflicts. It all stems from ethnic disputes between the Tutsis and Hutus. The extremist Hutu militaries have committed genocide acts against the Tutsis, and now, the Tutsi-dominated M23 has sought to take control of DRC after they failed to implement the 2009 agreement and is now committing violent acts against the people of DRC. Not just this, but the wars between DRC and Rwanda have caused huge catastrophes. In fact, the Council on Foreign Relations has stated that “the Second Congo War is widely considered the

deadliest in human history since World War II” (Center for Preventive Action). This group is committing human rights violations and other countries can not help but take measures to end this before it escalates even further to another war. Based on how violent the other wars were, it would be in the interest of the international community to prevent this war at all costs.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATION INVOLVED

DRC

Democratic Republic of Congo is the biggest country involved in the M23 conflict. The conflict takes place in DRC. They have accused Rwanda of backing the M23 rebels and have been backed up with evidence provided by the UN.

Rwanda

Rwanda is another big country involved as they have been accused of funding and supporting M23 as well as looting minerals from DRC using their troops. Rwanda and DRC have a long history of conflict between the two states. They have made accusations that the DRC is supporting Hutu militias.

Uganda

Uganda is not involved directly but they are still a factor in this conflict. They have troops in eastern DRC to help hunt down Ugandan militants connected to Islamic groups. However, they are also supporting the M23 by allowing them to use Ugandan territory for militant reasons. They have also been accused of looting DRC for their minerals.

Burundi

While not as crucial as other countries, Burundi plays a part in the conflict. Burundi and Rwanda have been hostile towards each other due to the fact that Burundi's government is Hutu-dominated and Rwanda's government is Tutsi-dominated. Because of the conflict, Rwanda sees Burundi as a threat to M23, even though it is M23 that is threatening to come closer to Burundi's borders and set up troops there.

South Africa

South Africa has sent most of its troops to fight with the Congolese army. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has accused the Rwandan president of killing 14 of their soldiers on the Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF). He threatened war if the RDF continued to attack. This has led to the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) being divided on this topic.

South African Development Community (SADC)

SADC has supported DRC tremendously by deploying troops in DRC. In this, there is the SAMIDRC (SADC Mission in the DRC), which is designed to be a response force if one member state gets attacked.

United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)

MONUSCO is an UN mission to oversee the stability of DRC. "Currently, the mission holds the three objectives of protecting civilians that include supporting disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as assisting with security sector reform." (Better World Campaign)

March 23 Movement

March 23 (M23) is the rebel group that has taken control over Goma. They are causing the issue in DRC as well as severing the ties between Rwanda and DRC.

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

April 1994 - Rwandan Genocide

The period when the ethnic Tutsi group fell victim to genocide by the armed, extremist Hutu militant group. This caused an influx of refugees from Rwanda to DRC.

October 24th 1996 - First Congo War

Fighting broke out between DRC and Rwanda. Kabila became the president of DRC after the war and AFDL took over Rwanda.

August 1998 - Second Congo War

Rally for Congolese Democracy fight to overthrow Kabila's government.

1991 - Agreements are Made

Agreements between Rwanda, DRC, and Uganda are made. This is also when the MONUSCO is deployed.

2012 - M23 is Formed

M23 seizes Goma after the failure to implement agreement made between CNDP and DRC.

2022 - M23 is on the Rise Again

After inactivity, they slowly start to take control over North Kivu.

Beginning of 2025 - Goma has been Siezed

M23 has control over Goma.

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES, & EVENTS

[Resolution 1533](#) is a resolution that imposed sanctions on all groups involvded in the conflict.

[Resolution 1807](#) is a resolution that renews the arms embargo on the groups operating in DRC and renews the use of force MONUSCO can use.

[Resolution 2098](#) is a resolution that discusses the circumstances that the use of force by the Force Intervention Brigade.

[The Luanda Agreement](#) is an agreement that called for withdrawl of Ugandan troops and dialogue between Rwanda and DRC.

In April 2022, there was the creation of [Nairobi Process](#), which is lead by the East African Committe, which is aimed to help restore peace in eastern DRC.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPT TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

In Feburary 2025, leaders from SADC and EAC had arrived in Tanzania to talk about restoring the peace in DRC. In this conference, they called for an imediate ceasefire and passages of

humanitarian supplies. Defence chiefs from SADC and EAC were tasked with developing a plan for security. M23 declared ceasefire but only for a few days, before they went back to fighting.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- Ensuring that the terms of agreements made in agreement with CNDP is implemented into the government
- Calls upon increased security measures around the border of DRC as well as around the mines to prevent looting
- Encourages sanctions from countries on the M23 rebels

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